

Message Text

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SUBJ: COMMERCE MINISTER PLEDGES HELP TO PRIVATE SECTOR IN
PRODUCTIVITY DRIVE

REF: PANAMA 6863

1. MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY MANFREDO REINFORCED COMMITMENT OF GOP TO WORK TOGETHER WITH PRIVATE SECTOR IN REACHING PRODUCTIVITY AND ANTI-INFLATION GOALS IN REMARKS TO NEWS MEDIA NOVEMBER 29. PLEDGING THAT THE BUSINESSMAN WILL RECEIVE ALL ASSISTANCE HE REQUIRES, MANFREDO ANNOUNCED ICEATION WITHIN HIS MINISTRY OF COMMITTEE FOR PRODUCTIVITY AND SEPARATE SPECIAL OFFICE TO ATTEND TO PROBLEMS BROUGHT TO IT BY PRIVATE ENTERPRISES, E.G. IN FIELDS OF TAXES, CONTRACTS, FINANCING, COST CONTROL, RATIONAL USE OF LABOR, ETC. HE INDICATED THAT THE "1975-- YEAR OF PRODUCTIVITY" CAMPAING WOULD PROCEED IN THREE PHASES:

A) DISCUSSIONS DURING DECEMBER BETWEEN THE MINISTRY AND BUSINESS AND LABOR GROUPS; 2) CREATION OF SEPARATE COMMITTEES OF PRODUCTIVITY BY PRIVATE SECTOR AND LABOR ORGANIZATIONS DURING EARLY MONTHS OF 1975 AND 3) CONSULTATIONS BETWEEN

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COMMITTEES AND MINISTRY THROUGHOUT YEAR, WITH LATTER

PROVIDING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE. OTHER GOVERNMENT AGENCIES ARE ALSO ANNOUNCING FORMATION OF "SAVING AND PRODUCTIVITY COMMITTEES" TO MONITOR THEIR OWN EFFORTS TO CUT EXPENDITURES.

2. MANFREDO'S PLEDGE COINCIDED WITH A NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PRIVATE ENTERPRISES (CONEP), PANAMA'S CONFEDERATION OF PRIVATE SECTOR ORGANIZATIONS, COMMUNIQUE STATING CONEP'S FULL SUPPORT FOR GOVERNMENT'S ANTI-INFLATION PROGRAM. CONEP, IN PUBLICLY GIVING ITS SUPPORT, ALSO TOOK ADVANTAGE OF OCCASION TO BOOST FREE ENTERPRISE AS WAY TO ASSURE THE BEST AND MOST RATIONAL UTILIZATION OF PRODUCTIVE RESOURCES AND PROVIDE ECONOMIC GROWTH, AND TO REITERATE THE NEED TO STRENGTHEN IN ALL NATIONAL ACTIVITIES FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, OF ASSEMBLY, OF ENTERPRISE, OF EDUCATION AND OF RELIGION.

3. COMMENT: CONEP HAS ANSWERED GOP'S CALL WITH PLEDGE OF WILLINGNESS TO COOPERATE COUPLED WITH STRONG REAFFIRMATION OF NEED TO RECOGNIZE STRENGTHS OF PRIVATE ENTERPRISE. IF FULLY UTILIZED, LATEST COPOSAL SHOULD PRESENT OPPORTUNITY TO INSTITUTIONALIZE DIALOGUE WITH GOVERNMENT WHICH PRIVATE SECTOR HAS CALLED FOR BUT THUS FAR FOUND WANTING. GOVERNMENT-PRIVATE SECTOR RELATIONS HAVE BEEN CLEARLY ON THE MEND SINCE A TRUCE WAS ESTABLISHED IN FEBRUARY FOLLOWING THE HOUSING LAW CONTROVERSY. THIS RAPPROACHMENT EVIDENT IN THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY'S PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR THE GOP'S CANAL TREATY POSITION AND BANANA EXPORT TAX INITIATIVE, APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN FURTHER CONSOLIDATED BY THE GOVERNMENT'S PRAGMATIC APPROACH TO THE COUNTRY'S CURRENT ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. WHILE THE GOP AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR HAVE NOT FULLY OVERCOME THEIR MUTUAL SUSPICIONS, THEY ARE IN THE INFLATION BOAT TOGETHER AND ARE CLEARLY INCLINED TO COOPERATE.
GONZALEZ

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